

APPLICATION FOR UNITED STATES LETTERS PATENT

for

IMPROVED INTERNAL BREAKER

by

David A. Ballard, Christopher A. Sawdon, and Trevor G. Jappy

EXPRESS MAIL MAILING LABEL	
NUMBER	_____
DATE OF DEPOSIT	_____
I hereby certify that this paper or fee is being deposited with the United States Postal Service "EXPRESS MAIL POST OFFICE TO ADDRESSEE" service under 37 C.F.R. 1.10 on the date indicated above and is addressed to: Assistant Commissioner for Patents, Washington D.C. 20231.	
_____ Signature	

10026063-121501

## BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

During the creation and subsequent operation of a subterranean well, the operator may wish to perform acts that could potentially damage the underground formations and their ability to produce desirable formation fluids. For example, the operator may wish to inject water into the well. The operator may do this to enhance the productivity of a well or to dispose of waste water.

In addition to water, other fluids are routinely used in the operation of a subterranean well. Drilling fluids are used to aid in the drilling of a well; both to cool the drill bit and to remove drill cuttings from the well. Completion fluids are used when completion operations are performed in a producing formation. Workover fluids are used when working over previously completed wells. In all of these cases, it can be desirable to seal off producing formations in order to prevent fluid loss from the well to the formation and to prevent possible damage to the formation.

One way of protecting the formation is by forming a filter cake on the surface of the subterranean formation. Filter cakes are formed when particles suspended in a wellbore fluid coat or plug the pores in the subterranean formation such that fluid is substantially prevented from passing between the formation and the wellbore and vice versa. A number of ways of forming filter cakes are known in the art, including the use of both clay and non-clay based drilling fluids.

In addition to the intentional formation of filter cakes, filter cakes can also be produced unintentionally. For instance, when drilling the well, the particles contained in the drilling mud can lodge in the pores of a formation that the operator desires to bring into production.

Whether the formation of the filter cake was unintentional and intentional, it is desirable to remove the filter cake when the formation is brought into production. The presence of the filter cake can hinder the passage of fluid from the formation to the wellbore and thereby retard production rates.

Various ways have been developed by those skilled in the art to form filter cakes that can be easily removed. For example US Patent 5,251,697 discloses the addition of calcium carbonate to water being injected into a well. The calcium carbonate particles either clog the pores in the subterranean rock formations or collect and build a filter cake.

10026063-121901

1 When the filter cake is to be removed, the '697 patent directs the operator to circulate an  
2 acid wash, preferably hydrochloric acid, into the well. The acid wash will dissolve the  
3 calcium carbonate and thereby destroy the filter cake. At this point the well can be  
4 brought into production or additional work performed on the well.

5 In US Patent 5,607,905 is disclosed a method of forming a filter cake using a fluid  
6 containing polysaccharide polymers, bridging particles and an alkaline earth metal or zinc  
7 peroxide. The method of the '905 patent seeks to have to particles in the fluid bridge  
8 over the formation pores rather than plug the holes. The polysaccharide polymers are  
9 typically added to the wellbore fluid as viscosifiers or fluid loss control additives. An  
10 earlier patent, US Patent 5,238,065, taught that filter cakes containing polysaccharide  
11 polymers could be removed by contacting the filter cake with a brine fluid containing a  
12 zinc or alkaline earth metal peroxide, an acidic substance such that the pH of the solution  
13 was between 1 and 8 and an activator for the peroxide. A wash solution would then be  
14 used to remove the filter cake. The degrading substance incorporated within the filter  
15 cake is generally referred to as an internal breaker. The use of an internal breaker was  
16 beneficial because it required less peroxide, less loss of wash fluid to the formation, and  
17 gave more complete removal of the filter cake.

18 However, these prior art systems contain several drawbacks. First, the peroxides  
19 used have a tendency to emit peroxide prior to activation, resulting in premature  
20 weakening of the filter cake as well as reducing the effectiveness of the polymers used to  
21 control fluid loss and viscosity. Additionally, these prior art methods require action on  
22 the part of the operator to remove the filter cake. This results in additional cost and  
23 delay. Also, the acid or other solutions used to dissolve filter cakes can have a harmful  
24 effect on the formation. The present invention provides an improved method for  
25 removing filter cakes in a subterranean well and the formulation and use of drilling fluids  
26 used to form such filter cakes.

#### 27 SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

28 One illustrative embodiment of the present invention is directed to a method of  
29 forming and subsequently removing filter cakes formed in a subterranean well. The filter  
30 cakes are formed using wellbore fluids to which have been added peroxide degradable  
31 polymers. A wellbore fluid containing a peroxide source should also be used in forming

1 the filter cake. The filter cakes can be removed using a pH change in the down hole  
2 environment. One way of accomplishing this pH change is by using the fluids produced  
3 from subterranean formations. The pH change can be used to activate a peroxide source  
4 that will release peroxide that will in turn react with the peroxide degradable polymers.

5 Additional illustrative embodiments of the present invention are wellbore fluids  
6 containing an encapsulated peroxide source and peroxide degradable polymers.

7 The present invention also includes the forming a filter cake in a down hole  
8 environment by pumping a wellbore fluid into a well and allowing some of the fluid to  
9 filter into a subterranean rock formation. The wellbore fluid may include a peroxide  
10 source, such as an alkaline earth metal or zinc peroxide, a polysaccharide and any other  
11 desired solids (for example, calcium carbonate). The filter cake will contain the peroxide  
12 source, the polysaccharide and the other materials suspended in the wellbore fluid. Once  
13 the filter cake is no longer desired, it can be removed by altering the pH, for example by  
14 allowing a substantial portion of fluids produced from the subterranean formation to  
15 contact the filter cake. The resulting change in pH will cause the peroxide source to  
16 activate and release peroxide. The release of the peroxide results in the degrading of the  
17 polysaccharide polymer so as to weaken the filter cake. The weakened filter cake will be  
18 more readily removed and result in a bore hole that is permeable to the produced fluids  
19 and allows for greater production rates.

#### 20 21 **DESCRIPTION OF ILLUSTRATIVE EMBODIMENTS**

22 The processes, methods and compositions described in this disclosure may be  
23 used to form an easily removed filter cake in a subterranean well. The filter cake may be  
24 formed by adding various components to a wellbore fluid, pumping the fluid into the  
25 wellbore and allowing the fluid to contact the desired subterranean formation.

26 The wellbore fluid may have a variety of compositions, the appropriate  
27 components of which can be selected by one skilled in the art. Preferably, the wellbore  
28 fluids are alkaline water based wellbore fluids. The pH of these solutions is preferably  
29 between about 7 to about 12, even more preferably between about 7.5 to about 10.5. The  
30 pH can be adjusted by methods known to those skilled in the art, including the addition of  
31 bases to the fluid. Such bases include potassium hydroxide, sodium hydroxide,

1 magnesium oxide, calcium hydroxide and zinc oxide. These aqueous fluids are  
2 generally brine solutions. Such fluids can be natural brine solutions, seawater or brines  
3 formed by dissolving suitable salts in water. Suitable salts include chloride, bromide,  
4 acetate and formate salts of potassium, sodium, calcium, magnesium, zinc and cesium.

5 A variety of components may be added to the wellbore fluid to achieve different  
6 desired properties, as would be known to those skilled in the art. For example, the  
7 wellbore fluid may include viscosifiers, such as polysaccharides or polysaccharide  
8 derivatives. Some representative polymers are discussed in US Patent 4,846,981 and the  
9 references cited therein, all of which are hereby incorporated by reference.

10 It may also be desirable to add components to the wellbore fluid to help control  
11 fluid loss. Fluid loss additives keep wellbore fluids from entering the subterranean  
12 formations while allowing the wellbore fluid to be maintained at a pressure greater than  
13 that of the formation. This pressure overbalance acts to keep the formation fluids from  
14 entering the wellbore. A variety of materials have been used to control fluid loss, some  
15 of which are described in US Patents 5,354,786; 4,387,769 and; 4,836,940. In particular,  
16 various polymers have been used to control fluid loss, including polysaccharides.

17 Wellbore fluids of the present invention preferably contain polysaccharide  
18 polymers for incorporation into a filter cake. Preferred polysaccharide polymers include  
19 starch derivatives, cellulose derivatives, and biopolymers, such as: hydroxypropyl starch,  
20 hydroxyethyl starch, carboxymethyl starch, and their corresponding lightly crosslinked  
21 derivatives; carboxymethyl cellulose, hydroxyethyl cellulose, hydroxypropyl cellulose,  
22 methyl cellulose, dihydroxypropyl cellulose, and their corresponding lightly crosslinked  
23 derivatives; xanthan gum, gellan gum, welan gum and schleroglucan gum.

24 Various types of solids can be suspended in wellbore fluids to bridge or block the  
25 pores of a subterranean formation. Such solids include those described in US Patents  
26 4,561,985; 3,872,018 and; 3,785,438, which are hereby incorporated by reference. For  
27 the purposes of the present invention, of particular interest are those solids soluble in acid  
28 solutions. Representative acid soluble bridging solids are calcium carbonate, limestone,  
29 marble, dolomite, iron carbonate and zinc oxide. However, other solids may be used  
30 without departing from the scope the present invention. Other representative solids  
31 include water soluble and oil soluble solids as described in US Patent 5,783,527.

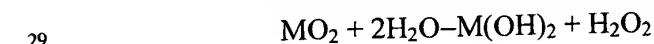
1 The wellbore fluids of the present invention include a wellbore fluid that contains  
 2 a peroxide source. Preferably, the peroxide source is an inorganic peroxide source such  
 3 as peroxide compounds of zinc or alkaline earth metals. Magnesium peroxide is  
 4 particularly preferred. Other peroxide sources known to those skilled in the art can be  
 5 used without departing from the scope of the present invention.

6 Alkaline earth peroxides and zinc peroxide are known water insoluble  
 7 compounds. See for example the following references, incorporated herein by reference:  
 8 (a) "Peroxides, Superoxides, and Ozonides of Alkali and Alkaline Earth Metals," Il'ya  
 9 Ivanovich Vol'nov (Translated by J. Woroncow, Edited by A. W. Petrocelli), Plenum  
 10 Press, New York, 1966; (b) "Kirk-Othmer Encyclopedia of Chemical Technology," Third  
 11 Edition, Vol. 17, John Wiley & Sons, 1982, pp. 1-26.

12 Inorganic peroxide compounds are commonly described as compounds whose  
 13 structures include the peroxy-group,  $-O-O-$ . Simple peroxide compounds include  
 14 peroxides in which the peroxy-group is bonded to a metallic atom via ionic bonding, and  
 15 includes hydroperoxides characterized by the presence of the hydroperoxyl ion  $(HO_2)^-$ .  
 16 Complex peroxide compounds include peroxides in which the peroxy-group as such, or  
 17 in the form of  $H_2O_2$  and  $HO_2$ , is bonded to the metallic atom by a covalent bond.  
 18 Complex peroxide compounds also include the addition compounds formed with  
 19 crystallized hydrogen peroxide.

20 The characteristic properties of peroxide compounds both simple and complex,  
 21 are: the formation of hydrogen peroxide upon reaction with dilute acid solution, the  
 22 liberation of oxygen as a result of thermal decomposition, and the liberation of oxygen  
 23 upon reaction with water and other chemical agents. Further characterization is possible  
 24 by dividing the simple inorganic peroxide compounds into four groups: (1)  
 25 hydroperoxide, characterized by the  $(HO_2)^-$  ion; (2) peroxides, characterized by the  $(O_2)^{2-}$   
 26 ion; (3) superoxides characterized by the  $(O_2)^-$  ion; and (4) ozonides, characterized by the  
 27  $(O_3)^-$  ion.

28 The hydrolysis of peroxides and hydroperoxides proceeds as follows:



30 and



1 where M=metal. For this reason, peroxides and hydroperoxides are considered as being  
2 derived from hydrogen peroxide by replacement of one or both the hydrogen atoms by  
3 metal atoms.

4 Complex peroxide compounds include peroxyhydrates, for example,  
5  $\text{CaO}_2 \cdot 2\text{H}_2\text{O}$ , and peroxyhydrate hydrates, for example,  $\text{BaO}_2 \cdot \text{H}_2\text{O}_2 \cdot 20\text{H}_2\text{O}$ .

6 Peroxides of calcium, strontium and barium belong to the  $\text{M}^{2+}\text{O}_2^{2-}$  type of  
7 peroxide compounds, while peroxides of magnesium and zinc, of general formula  
8  $\text{MO}_2 \cdot x\text{H}_2\text{O}$ , probably belong to the  $\text{HO-M-OOH}$  type where the covalent bond between  
9 the hydroperoxyl group and the metal atom is the same as that in hydrogen peroxide.

10 Calcium peroxide is generally prepared by industrial processes that provide a  
11 product containing 60-75 wt. %  $\text{CaO}_2$ . Reaction of  $\text{CaO}_2 \cdot 8\text{H}_2\text{O}$  with solutions containing  
12 greater than 20 wt. % of hydrogen peroxide results in the formation of calcium  
13 peroxyhydrate,  $\text{CaO}_2 \cdot 2\text{H}_2\text{O}_2$ . Strontium peroxide, industrial grade, generally contains 80-  
14 95%  $\text{SrO}_2$ . Industrial grade barium peroxide generally contains up to about 90%  $\text{BaO}_2$ .  
15 Depending on its method of production, industrial grade magnesium peroxide contains  
16 from about 25%  $\text{MgO}_2$  to about 50%  $\text{MgO}_2$  and generally is a mixture of peroxide, oxide,  
17 and magnesium oxide hydrate. Industrial grade zinc peroxide contains about 55%  $\text{ZnO}_2$ .  
18 For all purposes of the present invention, the term "peroxide" includes all forms of  
19 peroxides, including simple peroxides, such as hydroperoxides characterized by the  
20  $(\text{HO}_2)^-$  ion and peroxides characterized by the  $(\text{O}_2)^-$  ion, and complex peroxides such as  
21 peroxyhydrates and peroxyhydrate hydrates.

22 Although optional, free radical scavengers or reducing agents may be added to  
23 wellbore solution embodiments of the present invention. These materials may enhance  
24 the stability of the fluid and aid in avoiding premature degradation of the polysaccharide  
25 or other peroxide degradable polymers in the wellbore fluid. Representative reducing  
26 agents are water soluble sulfites, bisulfites, thiosulfates, dithionites, and mixtures thereof,  
27 particularly the alkali metal or ammonium salts thereof, preferably a water soluble  
28 thiosulfate, most preferably sodium thiosulfate. Representative antioxidants or free  
29 radical scavengers include water soluble mercaptans, thioethers, thiocarbonyls, low  
30 molecular weight alcohols and glycols, and mixtures thereof.

10026063-121901

1 Certain embodiments of the present invention utilize peroxide sources that have  
2 been encapsulated. Prior art methods, such as that described in US Patent 5,783,527,  
3 suffer somewhat from premature release of peroxide that can degrade the filter cake and  
4 reduce the effectiveness of the polysaccharide polymers used for fluid loss and  
5 viscosifying purposes. This release occurs despite the formation of a coating of  
6 magnesium hydroxide that forms on the surface of the peroxide when it was added to  
7 water. This layer of magnesium hydroxide somewhat retards the release of peroxide.  
8 However, enough peroxide is still released to have negative effects on the filter cake and  
9 the properties of the drilling fluid.

10 It has been found that encapsulating the peroxide source can further aid in  
11 preventing the early release of peroxide. For the purposes of the present invention, an  
12 encapsulated peroxide is a peroxide that has a coating sufficient to control the release of  
13 peroxide until a set of conditions selected by the operator occurs. Some general  
14 encapsulating materials include natural and synthetic oils, natural and synthetic polymers  
15 and enteric polymers and mixtures thereof. However, many methods of encapsulating  
16 can be used without departing from the scope of the present invention. The preferred  
17 method of encapsulating the peroxide sources is by coating the peroxide with a polymer.

18 Similarly, many methods could be used to cause the release of the peroxide upon  
19 the occurrence of specific conditions desired by the operator. For example, the peroxide  
20 could be caused to be released by a change in temperature, pressure, pH, abrasion or any  
21 number of other environmental factors. A preferred method of releasing the peroxide for  
22 the purposes of dissolving a filter cake in a subterranean well is by having the peroxide  
23 release upon a change in pH in the down hole environment.

24 Those skilled in the art will appreciate that there are many possible mechanisms  
25 by which the coating may be removed. The methods discussed below are intended to  
26 illustrate possible methods by which this release might occur. This discussion is not  
27 intended to in any way limit the scope of the invention as set forth in the appended  
28 claims.

29 The coating polymer should preferably form a film around the peroxide source.  
30 The polymer should be chosen such that the coating will remain substantially intact until  
31 the desired release conditions occur. For the purposes of filter cake removal, it is



10026063-121901

1 preferable that the coating respond to changes in pH. The preferred polymers of the  
2 present invention are enteric polymers, which are defined for the purposes of this  
3 invention as polymers whose solubility characteristics are pH dependent. Here, this  
4 means that peroxide release is promoted by a change from conditions of a first  
5 predetermined pH value to a second predetermined pH condition.

6 Enteric polymers are commonly used in the pharmaceutical industry for the  
7 controlled release of drugs and other pharmaceutical agents over time. The use of enteric  
8 polymers allows for the controlled release of the peroxide source under predetermined  
9 conditions of pH or pH and temperature. For example the Glascol family of polymers are  
10 acrylic based polymers (available from Ciba Specialty Chemicals) are considered suitable  
11 enteric polymers for this invention because the solubility depends upon the pH of the  
12 solution.

13 In the case where pH alone is used to control peroxide release, a preferred  
14 illustrative embodiment of the present invention is to select as an encapsulating material  
15 an enteric polymer that is substantially insoluble at pH values greater than about 7.5 and  
16 that is more soluble under conditions of decreasing pH. Thus as the pH decreases in  
17 value (i.e. the solution becomes more acidic) release of peroxide is promoted. In one  
18 preferred illustrative embodiment the enteric polymer encapsulated peroxide is combined  
19 with an alkaline wellbore fluid of the type described above. This fluid is then pumped  
20 into the wellbore and a filter cake is formed that incorporates the encapsulated peroxide.  
21 The peroxide source can now be activated by causing the down hole environment to  
22 become more acidic and thereby degrade the encapsulating material. Again, it should be  
23 emphasized that this is merely one possible mechanism by which the peroxide release  
24 may occur in the down hole environment. Those skilled in the art will recognize that  
25 other factors, or a combination of factors, may in fact result in the peroxide's release.  
26 The methods discussed here are intended to illustrate possible mechanisms by which  
27 peroxide release may occur and are not intended to narrow the scope of the invention, as  
28 defined by the claims herein.

29 For example, abrasion may contribute to peroxide release. As discussed above,  
30 peroxides, such as magnesium peroxide, may form a protective coating when added to  
31 water. It is possible that the polymer coating enhances this natural coating, making the

1 peroxide more resistant to abrasion. This abrasion resistance may result in the peroxide  
2 being more stable in the down hole environment and allowing its release to be more  
3 precisely controlled.

4 When the filter cake is no longer needed, it can be easily removed. In order to  
5 remove the filter cake, the peroxide source should be activated such that peroxide is  
6 released in the down hole environment. The peroxide will then react with and degrade  
7 any peroxide degradable polymers in the filter cake. As mentioned above, many different  
8 methods of activating the peroxide source can be used without departing from the scope  
9 of the present invention.

10 In a one illustrative embodiment where a peroxide coated with an enteric polymer  
11 is used, the method of activating the peroxide is by changing the pH value of the down  
12 hole environment. Preferably, an alkaline wellbore fluid is used to deliver the peroxide  
13 and form the filter cake. Subsequently, the down hole environment is made more acidic,  
14 causing the release of peroxide.

15 For the general purposes and scope of the present invention, the method of  
16 causing the down hole environment to become more acidic is not limited to any particular  
17 method. However, two preferred methods will be discussed. Generally, it has been  
18 discovered that milder clean up treatments than those reported in the prior art can be  
19 successfully used to remove peroxide containing filter cakes.

20 One such method is to add an acid source to the down hole environment from the  
21 surface. According to this method, an acidic soak solution is added to the well. The  
22 acidic soak solution will activate the peroxide, which will release peroxide, causing the  
23 peroxide degradable polymers (for example, polysaccharides) to degrade. The acid,  
24 depending about the acid selected and the strength of the acid, may also decompose the  
25 peroxide degradable polymers to some extent and may also be used to decompose acid  
26 soluble bridging agents (such as calcium carbonate). Additionally, the acid soak can be  
27 used remove an encapsulating material from the peroxide source, such as removing an  
28 acid soluble enteric polymer coating.

29 After decomposing the polysaccharide polymers with the acid solution, it is  
30 preferred that the filter cake containing the decomposed polymer be washed with a wash  
31 fluid in which the bridging particles are soluble, such as by contacting or circulating

1 within the borehole the washing fluid. In this manner, the major components of the filter  
2 cake are decomposed or removed, and the filter cake is effectively destroyed and  
3 removed from the sides of the borehole.

4 In one non-limiting example of a clean up solution, it is preferred that the acidic  
5 soak solution have no appreciable solubilizing effect on the bridging particles within the  
6 filter cake. This prevents the premature breakthrough of the soak solution through a  
7 portion of the filter cake and, hence, allows all of the filter cake to be contacted by the  
8 soak solution until the peroxide has decomposed the polysaccharide polymers  
9 substantially. If the bridging particles are water soluble, preferably the aqueous liquid in  
10 the soak solution will be saturated with respect to the bridging particles. Thus if the  
11 bridging particles are sized sodium chloride, the aqueous liquid will preferably be  
12 saturated with respect to sodium chloride. Additionally, the soak solution should have a  
13 density that is compatible with the density of the liquid in the borehole that the soak  
14 solution displaces in order to minimize mixing of the soak solution with the liquid.  
15 Preferably the soak solution contains inorganic water soluble salts dissolved therein in  
16 amounts up to saturation to provide the desired density. Typical salts are generally  
17 selected from the group consisting of sodium chloride, sodium bromide, potassium  
18 chloride, potassium bromide, calcium chloride, calcium bromide, zinc chloride, zinc  
19 bromide, sodium formate, potassium formate, cesium formate, and mixtures thereof.  
20 Certain of these salts are acidic, and, thus, they may also function as acidic substances to  
21 provide the required pH.

22 In this example, it is preferred that the soak solution be solids-free, i.e., contain no  
23 appreciable content of suspended solids, thus contains essentially only dissolved  
24 substances. The soak solution may be filtered using procedures well known in the art of  
25 using clear brine fluids, if desired.

26 Although many types of clean up fluids can be used, one example is a soak  
27 solution that is preferably acidic to solubilize and activate the peroxide in the filter cake.  
28 As mentioned above, it has been discovered that milder clean up solutions can be used  
29 than those reported in the prior art. Representative acidic substances include hydrochloric  
30 acid, phosphoric acid, formic acid, acetic acid, propionic acid, glycolic acid, sulfamic  
31 acid, citric acid, aluminum chloride, zinc chloride, zinc bromide, calcium bromide, ferric

1 chloride, sodium dihydrogen phosphate, sodium acid pyrophosphate, acidic buffers, and  
2 the like. Sulfamic acid and citric acid are preferred.

3 In certain clean up solutions, it may be preferable, as will be appreciated by those  
4 skilled in the art, that the acidic solution comprise an acid in a saturated solution of a  
5 water soluble salt in which the bridging particles are not soluble, and that the bridging  
6 particles are water soluble. It is particularly preferred that the water soluble salt and the  
7 bridging particles are sodium chloride.

8 When clean up solutions such as those described above are used, the soak solution  
9 should contact the filter cake for a period of time that is at least sufficient to decompose  
10 the polysaccharide polymers in the filter cake to such an extent that the filter cake  
11 becomes a loosely adherent mass of bridging particles. The greater the acid strength or  
12 the higher the formation temperature, and hence, the higher the temperature to which the  
13 soak solution is heated, the lower the time required to contact the filter cake with the soak  
14 solution. Generally, the soak solution will contact the filter cake from approximately one-  
15 half to ten hours. Thereafter the filter cake is preferably contacted with a wash solution to  
16 remove the remaining filter cake solids, principally the bridging particles and any  
17 remaining polymers and polymer degradation products.

18 The wash solution is one in which the bridging particles are at least partially  
19 soluble. Thus if the bridging solids are water soluble, the wash solution is undersaturated  
20 with respect to the bridging solids. If the bridging solids are acid soluble, a suitable acidic  
21 solution is used as the wash solution. If the bridging solids are oil or solvent soluble, a  
22 suitable oil or solvent is used as the wash solution.

23 It is preferred that the wash solution have no appreciable effect on the  
24 permeability of the hydrocarbon-containing formation. Thus aqueous solutions  
25 containing one or more salts which inhibit the swelling and/or dispersion of particles  
26 within the formation are preferred. Representative of such salts are potassium salts, such  
27 as potassium chloride and potassium acetate, ammonium chloride, quaternary ammonium  
28 salts of low molecular weight, such as tetramethyl ammonium chloride,  
29 tetraethylammonium chloride, and in general tetraalkylammonium salts in which the  
30 alkyl groups independently contain from 1 to about 4 carbon atoms, and other salts as is  
31 known in the art. Preferably the wash solution will contain from about 0.05% to about

1 10% by weight of the salt, most preferably from about 0.1% to about 5%. It is  
2 particularly preferred that the wash solution contain from about 2% to about 5% by  
3 weight potassium chloride or ammonium chloride.

4 A second illustrative method of acidifying the down hole environment such that a  
5 peroxide source is activated has been discovered in which fluids produced from the  
6 subterranean formation can be successfully used. It is known that formation fluids are  
7 typically acidic due to the presence of carbon dioxide, sulfur, mineral acids, oxygen and  
8 organic acids. Typically, these substances have been problematic due to their corrosive  
9 effects on wellbore apparatus, see, for example, US Patent 4,837,323; US Patent  
10 5,960,878 and; US Patent 6,248,700.

11 The acidic formation fluids can be used to activate peroxide sources in the down  
12 hole environment, obviating the need for acid solutions to be added to the wellbore. This  
13 is advantageous because it saves the operator the money otherwise spent on the acid  
14 treatments, labor costs and lost rig time while administering the acid soak and avoids  
15 possible damage to the subterranean formations from the acid soak and wash solutions.  
16 However, additional fluids may be used in addition to the produced fluids without  
17 departing from the scope of the present invention, so long as a substantial portion of  
18 produced fluids are used. For purposes of the present invention, a substantial portion of  
19 produced fluids means an amount sufficient to cause a change in the pH value of a down  
20 hole environment.

21 The formation fluids can be used to activate unencapsulated peroxide sources.  
22 Additionally, the formation fluids can be the stimulus that results in the removal of an  
23 encapsulating material from a protected peroxide source. In particular, the formation  
24 fluids can be used to lower the pH of a filter cake containing peroxides encapsulated in an  
25 enteric polymer. The formation fluids may activate peroxides coated with an enteric  
26 polymer.

27 In either method of acidifying the down hole environment, an activator can be  
28 included in the acidic soak solution to further activate the peroxide and/or to increase the  
29 rate of reaction between the peroxide and the polysaccharide. Known activators include  
30 iron and copper salts as well as salts of other transition metals, such as soluble ferric,  
31 ferrous, cuprous, cobaltous, nickelous, manganous, and the like salts. The activator

1 should be soluble in the soak solution. The preferred metallic cation activator is a source  
2 of the ferric or ferrous cation, such as ferrous sulfate, ferrous ammonium sulfate, ferrous  
3 chloride, ferric ammonium sulfate, and the like. The amount of activator, if used, is not  
4 critical and need only be sufficient to provide the desired rate of reaction. Generally, a  
5 metallic cation activator will be present in an amount from about 0.00025% to about  
6 0.0025% by weight of the soak solution.

7 Other activators that are effective in the present invention have been discovered to  
8 be water soluble organic hydroxyl compounds having the empirical formula



9  
10 where a is an integer from 1 to about 5, and Z is a radical selected from the group  
11 consisting of H, OH, and  $(\text{OC}_b\text{H}_{2b})_n\text{OR}$  where b is 2, 3, or mixtures thereof, n is an  
12 integer from 0 to about 3, and R is a radical selected from the group consisting of H,  $\text{C}_x$   
13  $\text{H}_{2x+1}$ , and  $\text{C}_y\text{H}_{2y+1}\text{CO}$ , where x is an integer from 1 to 5 and y is an integer from 1 to 3.  
14 Preferably a=2 or 3, and  $\text{Z}=(\text{OC}_b\text{H}_{2b})_n\text{OR}$  provided that when n=0,  $\text{R}=\text{C}_x\text{H}_{2x+1}$ . Thus it is  
15 preferred that the water soluble hydroxy-containing organic compound activator contain  
16 at least one ether group or radical within its molecular structure. Generally, a water  
17 soluble organic hydroxyl compound activator will be present in the soak solution in an  
18 amount from about 0.1% to about 2.5% by volume, preferably from about 0.2% to about  
19 1.0% by volume.

20 The following examples are included to demonstrate certain illustrative  
21 embodiments the invention. It should be appreciated by those of skill in the art that the  
22 techniques disclosed in the examples which follow represent techniques discovered by  
23 the inventors to function well in the practice of the invention, and thus can be considered  
24 to constitute preferred modes for its practice. However, those of skill in the art should  
25 appreciate that many changes, consistent with the present disclosure, can be made in the  
26 specific embodiments which are disclosed and still obtain a like or similar result without  
27 departing from the scope of the invention.

28 The following examples describe the preparation of an encapsulated peroxide  
29 source of the present invention and results from experiments probing the qualities of the  
30 encapsulated peroxide under simulated well conditions.

1 Example 1. Finely powdered magnesium peroxide is encapsulated in a 10%  
 2 (wt/wt) coating of acrylic polymer. First, 20 grams of magnesium peroxide was added,  
 3 with agitation, to a mixture of 10 ml of the acrylic polymer solution (at 20% (wt/wt)  
 4 solids) and 20 ml of water. The resulting slurry was dried out at 93 °C for 30 minutes.  
 5 The material was cooled and the resulting solid ground to a fine powder.

6 Example 2. The material produced from Example 1 was subjected to a leak off  
 7 test in order to test the effectiveness of the encapsulated peroxide in degrading the filter  
 8 cake under simulated wellbore conditions. The test involved exposing filter cakes to 3%  
 9 (wt/wt) KCl brine and carbon dioxide for a set period at high temperatures and pressures  
 10 and then measuring the flow of the brine through the filter cake. This measurement gives  
 11 a relative comparison of how each treatment has degraded the filter cake.

12 **Table 1. Composition of Wellbore Fluid Used in Fluid Leak Off and Fluid Loss**  
 13 **Tests Described in Example 2.**

Material	Fluid Tested at 93 and 113 degrees Celsius	Fluid Tested at 123 degrees Celsius
Water	332.0	332.0
Defoamer	0.2	0.2
KCl	26.0	26.0
Fine Calcium Carbonate (Safecarb M)	42.0	42.0
Biopolymer Viscosifier	1.5	1.5
Starch Based Fluid Loss Additive (Dualtrol)	5.0	-
High Temperature Starch Based Fluid Loss Additive (Exstar HT)	-	5.0
Biocide (Safecide)	0.2	0.2

14  
 15 In this series of experiments, the goal was to determine whether peroxide would  
 16 be released under the simulated reservoir conditions. Mildly acidic conditions were used

in the test to simulate the conditions found in a typical wellbore due to the presence of carbon dioxide. The test consisted of the following steps.

First, a fluid loss test was performed to grow filter cakes on 10 micron pore diameter ceramic discs at the respective test temperatures and 500 psi nitrogen differential pressure for two hours. Second, the cell was emptied and then filled with a 3% potassium chloride solution to represent the displacement to completion brine. Third, a mildly acidic environment was produced by pressurizing the cell to 300 psi with carbon dioxide and statically aging it for 16 hours at 80°C. Finally, after aging, the brine leak off rate through the filter cake at 100 psi nitrogen differential pressure was measured. This final step is useful to determine how the filter cake has changed compared to control formulations. The test also provides information about spurt and fluid loss measurement that can be used to give an indication of whether the polymers have been degraded by premature release of peroxide.

**Table 2. Results of Fluid Loss Test at 93, 113 and 123 °C as Described in Example 2.**

Temperature (°C)	Test	Fluid Loss (ml) Using:		
		Base Fluid	Base Fluid + 5g Magnesium Peroxide	Base + 5g Polymer Encapsulated Magnesium Peroxide
93				
	Spurt	3.0	3.5	3.0
	120 min	17.0	25.8	18.0
113				
	Spurt	2.7	6.5	2.3
	120 min	21.3	43.2	25.8
123				
	Spurt	2.7 ml	5.2	1.5
	120 min	19.7	33.6	21.3



The test outlined above was performed on three separate materials. First, the test was performed on a base fluid, the contents of which are summarized in Table 1. Second, the test was performed on the base fluid to which had been added 5 grams of magnesium peroxide. Finally, the test was performed on the base fluid plus 5 grams of polymer encapsulated magnesium peroxide, as described in Example 1.

**Table 3. Results for Fluid Leak Off Test at 93, 113 and 123 °C as Described in Example 2.**

Temperature (°C)	Test	Fluid Leak Off (ml) Using		
		Base Fluid	Base Fluid + 5g Magnesium Peroxide	Base Fluid + 5g Polymer Encapsulated Magnesium Peroxide
93				
	Spurt	0.5	1.0	>50
	120 minutes	5.9	23.1	-
113				
	Spurt	0.3	1.0	>50
	7.5 minutes	2.5	>50	-
	120 minutes	12.4	-	-
123				
	Spurt	Trace	3.5	>50
	5 minutes	2.9	>50	-
	120 minutes	29.0	-	-

The spurt and fluid loss test results for the three materials at 93, 113 and 123 degrees Celsius are summarized in Tables 2, 3 and 4 respectively. The results of the leak of tests at the same three temperatures are summarized in Tables 5, 6 and 7.

The results of these tests demonstrate that polymer encapsulation is an effective way to prevent early release of peroxide. The values for the fluid loss test are very similar using both the base fluid alone and using the base fluid plus the encapsulated peroxide. By contrast, the values for the base fluid plus non-encapsulated peroxide are much higher for both the spurt test and after two hours-indicating that peroxide is already

1 breaking down the filter cake. However, after the filter cake and the test fluids were  
 2 exposed to carbon dioxide, the situation reversed itself. After carbon dioxide exposure,  
 3 the base solution containing the encapsulated peroxide results very close to those

**Table 4. Composition of Wellbore Fluid Used in Fluid Leak Off and Fluid Loss Tests for the Coated Peroxide Described in Example 3.**

Material	Fluid Tested at 93°C
Water	332.0
Defoamer	0.2
KCl	26.0
Fine Calcium Carbonate (Safecarb M)	30.0
Biopolymer Viscosifier	1.5
Starch Based Fluid Loss Additive (Dualtrol)	5.0
Biocide (Safecide)	0.2
Fine Clay solids (Simulated Contamination)	12

4 obtained using the base solution plus the non-encapsulated peroxide. In both these cases,  
 5 there is essentially no leak off control, indicating the filter cake has become greatly  
 6 weakened.

7 Example 3. Magnesium peroxide is coated with Magnafloc polymer. The  
 8 polymer used in this test is Magnafloc E30 and is obtained from Ciba Specialty  
 9 Chemicals as a 27% (wt/vol) polymer solids content water in oil emulsion. First, 5.6 ml  
 10 of the polymer emulsion is added, with agitation, to 10 g of finely powered magnesium  
 11 peroxide to give a 15% (wt/wt) polyacrylamide coating on the magnesium peroxide.  
 12 Mixing of the sample continues for 5 minutes to ensure homogeneity. Following this, 5g  
 13 of the coated material is added to the fluid described in Table 4. This mixture is then  
 14 tested using the method described in Example 2 at 93°C. The results from this test are  
 15 presented in Tables 5 and 6.

1 **Table 5. Results of Fluid Loss Test at 93°C Using the Coated Peroxide Described in**  
 2 **Example 3.**

Temperature (°C)	Test	Fluid Loss (ml) Using:		
		Base Fluid	Base Fluid + 5g Magnesium Peroxide	Base Fluid + 5g Polyacrylamide Wet Coated Magnesium Peroxide
93				
	Spurt	3.0	3.0	3.0
	120 min	14.3	23.4	15.6

3

4 **Table 6. Results for Fluid Leak Off Test at 93°C Using Coated Peroxide Described**  
 5 **in Example 3.**

Temperature (°C)	Test	Fluid Leak Off (ml) Using		
		Base Fluid	Base Fluid + 5g Magnesium Peroxide	Base Fluid + 5g Polyacrylamide Wet Coated Magnesium Peroxide
93	Spurt	0.5	25	20
	Time Lapse	16.9 (after 120 minutes)	50 (after 90 seconds)	50 (after 120 seconds)

6

7 The purpose of example 3 is firstly, it demonstrates an alternative "wet" method  
 8 of preparation, where the polymer does not have to be dried on to the surface of the  
 9 particle. Secondly, it shows that polyacrylamide homopolymer functions as a coating and  
 10 encapsulating material, as it prevents premature release of peroxide, as shown by the data  
 11 in table 5 compared to a fluid contain uncoated magnesium peroxide and that it allows  
 12 the release of peroxide when the pH is reduced as shown by the data in Table 6.

13 In view of the above disclosure, one of skill in the art should understand and  
 14 appreciate that one illustrative embodiment of the present invention is generally directed  
 15 to a wellbore fluid including a peroxide degradable polymer and an encapsulated  
 16 peroxide source. In a preferred illustrative embodiment, the peroxide degradable

1 polymer is a polysaccharide. The encapsulated peroxide source is another embodiment  
2 of the present invention. In a preferred illustrative embodiment, the peroxide source that  
3 has been encapsulated is an inorganic peroxide compound. In a more preferred  
4 illustrative embodiment, the inorganic peroxide compound is a peroxide compound of  
5 zinc, alkaline earth metals, and combinations thereof. In a particularly preferred  
6 illustrative embodiment, the peroxide source is magnesium peroxide.

7 The encapsulating material is preferably stable in liquids having a pH value of  
8 about 7.5 or greater. In a preferred illustrative embodiment, the encapsulating material is  
9 a polymer. In a more preferred illustrative embodiment, the polymer is an enteric  
10 polymer. In a particularly preferred illustrative embodiment, the polymer is a copolymer  
11 of acrylic acid or its derivatives and at least one acrylate compound. Even more  
12 particularly preferred are copolymers of a mixture of monomers selected from acrylic  
13 acid, acrylamide, methacrylic acid, ethyl acrylate, methyl methacrylate, and combinations  
14 thereof.

15 In another illustrative embodiment, the present invention is directed generally to a  
16 process for using fluids produced from a subterranean rock formation to cause a change  
17 in pH of a down hole environment that will cause a peroxide source to activate. In one  
18 preferred illustrative embodiment, the produced fluids are used to change the pH of a  
19 filter cake. In a different preferred illustrative embodiment, the produced fluids are used  
20 to change the pH of a wellbore fluid in the down hole environment.

21 In another preferred illustrative embodiment, the peroxide source is provided to  
22 the down hole environment in a wellbore fluid. In a more preferred illustrative  
23 embodiment, the wellbore fluid is one of the above described wellbore fluids containing  
24 an encapsulated peroxide source and/or a peroxide degradable polymer. In a particularly  
25 preferred illustrative embodiment, the wellbore fluid contains an inorganic peroxide  
26 source, even more particularly preferred are peroxide compounds of zinc, alkaline earth  
27 metals, and combinations thereof. Magnesium peroxide is a more particularly preferred  
28 peroxide source.

29 The utility of the present invention is further demonstrated in an additional  
30 illustrative embodiment of the present invention. This embodiment is directed to a  
31 process for degrading polysaccharide polymers contained in a filter cake located on a

10026063-121904

1 subterranean rock formation. The process includes the steps of suspending a peroxide  
2 source in a wellbore fluid, the wellbore fluid having a pH value greater than about 7.5.  
3 Additional compounds, as would be known to be desirable to those skilled in the art, can  
4 be included in the wellbore fluid without departing from the scope of present invention.  
5 As the wellbore fluid is pumped into the well, some of the fluid should be allowed to  
6 filter into a subterranean rock formation and thereby produce a filter cake. The filter cake  
7 should contain the polysaccharides, the peroxide source and any other materials  
8 suspended in the wellbore fluid. Work can now be done on the well without damaging  
9 the protected formation. When any desired work has been completed, the filter cake can  
10 be removed by bringing the well into production of a subterranean rock formation fluid.  
11 As a substantial portion of formation fluids contact the filter cake, the pH of the down  
12 hole environment will lower, allowing the peroxide source to activate. As the peroxide  
13 source activates, it will release peroxide that will in turn degrade the polysaccharide  
14 polymers. The filter cake will be weakened by the degradation of the polymers and  
15 hence be more permeable to the production fluids, resulting in increased rates of  
16 production.

17 In a preferred illustrative embodiment, the peroxide source is one of the peroxide  
18 sources described above. In a more preferred illustrative embodiment, the peroxide  
19 source has been encapsulated as described in other embodiments of the invention.

20 While the compositions, methods and processes of this invention have been  
21 described in terms of preferred illustrative embodiments, it will be apparent to those of  
22 skill in the art that variations may be applied to the processes and compositions described  
23 herein without departing from the content and scope of the invention. Additionally, the  
24 processes, methods and compositions described in this disclosure are not intended to be  
25 limited to any particular art. All such similar substitutes and modifications apparent to  
26 those skilled in any relevant art where these processes, methods and compositions may  
27 find use are deemed to be within the scope and concept of the invention as it is set out in  
28 the following claims.